



"Stone Reader" director Mark Moskowitz's son.

"STONE READER"

This awkward if sincere documentary (\$39.95, New Yorker) shows the obsession of director **Mark Moskowitz** over the out of print novel "The Stones of Summer" by **Dow Mossman**. He tracks down copies of the book, speaks to other fans of what he considers a landmark and finds out what happened to the author, who had simply disappeared. Staged moments, recreations — every trick of **Errol Morris** is used less adroitly here. But there's a happy ending: The movie's release prompted a reissue of the book. Better than average extras feature **Janet Maslin** and **Roger Ebert**, among others.

"H.R. PUFNSTUF": COMPLETE SERIES

Were there really only 17 episodes of this 1969 fantasy series about Jimmy, his magic talking flute, Witchiepoo, and the other stars of "H.R. Pufnstuf" (\$39.95, Rhino)? Maybe it looms large in the imagination because it's just so darn strange: Cockney lad **Jack Wild** as the star, **Billie Hayes** amusingly camp as the evil witch, sly druggie references, hippie puppets, anti-Vietnam messages ("Make candy, not war") and, of course, the oddly inexpressive life-sized denizens of Living Island who had all their dialogue dubbed, adding to the surreal air of **Sid and Marty Krofft's** show. It was a brief hit, but no one imitated their style because no one could.

"PICKUP ON SOUTH STREET"

Wow. Samuel Fuller's no-nonsense 1953 drama about a pickpocket who unwittingly snags top secret microfilm that both the Commies and the police are desperate to get their hands on is just about as adult and entertaining as anyone could wish. Snappy dialogue, a taut screenplay, a great broad (Jean Peters) who pays the price for falling for a tough guy — does it get any better than this? Nope.

THE BEST OF ABBOTT & COSTELLO

Major kudos to Universal and its Franchise Collection series. They've been making great use of their catalog by packaging together relatively minor movies in inexpensive boxed sets. Here you get eight pretty darn funny Abbott & Costello flicks from the early '40s, including "Buck Privates" and "Hold That Ghost," for just \$24.98. Parents should jump on it.

Also out:

On TV, even teens from outer space are better looking than normal kids, as proven on "**Roswell**": **Season One** (\$59.98, Fox); John Grisham's "**Runaway Jury**" (\$27.98, Fox) couldn't be brought home even with talent like John Cusack and Gene Hackman; Antonioni's 1966 classic "**Blow-Up**" (\$19.98, Warner Bros.) is just as important for its Herbie Hancock jazz score as for its storyline; Adrien Brody's oddball ventriloquism movie "**The Dummy**" (\$26.98, Artisan) is surely the first DVD with a commentary track featuring a ventriloquist and his wooden partner; if you dig James Spader on "The Practice," check out the fine TV movie "**The Pentagon Papers**" (\$24.99, Paramount); Iran's best exports are movies, including female director Samira Makhmalbaf's acclaimed drama "**Blackboards**" (\$24.98, Wellspring); 1988's "**Permanent Record**" (\$14.99, Paramount) may be an after-school special about suicide, but it has some fine acting from Keanu Reeves and others.

Out next week:

The third season of the classic comedy "**The Dick Van Dyke Show**"; Merchant-Ivory's most personal film, "**Maurice**"; and Richard Pryor's eponymous sketch-comedy TV series from 1977.